



King County
Career Support Services Program

LETTER OF INTEREST



QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

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Letter of Interest or Cover Letter

The letter of interest is other wise commonly known as a cover letter, introduces you and your background of professional skills to the prospective employer. The letter of intent is the first thing an employer is going to read, so it needs to be clear, concise, to the point and eye catching

The letter interest has several purposes:

- to convince the employer that you have the best skills, qualifications and job experience to be the perfect candidate for the position
- to convince the employer to read your resume; and
- to convince the employer that it would be very worthwhile to invite you to for interview

TIPS ON CONSTRUCTING A LETTER OF INTEREST

- Always make the letter of interest professional in appearance
- Type it on a computer or typewriter (no handwritten letters or messy letters)
- Use white paper
- Do not fax or photocopy a letter interest
- Letter of interest should accompany your resume, unless you have sent your resume via email in which case you may attach your letter of interest to the email
- Be very formal in letter of interest; and try not to have any grammar or spelling mistakes (proof read and use spell check)
- Always start the letter off with the date you are writing letter, the address of the department or company you are sending your letter of interest to, the person who is going to receive it and read it; a professional salutation, or the person's name
- Addressing the letter to a real person is much better than addressing it *To Whom It May Concern* or *Dear Sir or Madam*
- Be truthful about your information as background checks and reference checks are done on most applicants
- Do not include personal information nor personal hobbies - the employer is interested only in your work history
- Do not make letter of interest too long! A letter of interest that is two pages long will likely be discarded
- Sign and print your name; and add another salutation like "sincerely"

Simple Steps to a Successful Letter of Interest

Your letter of interest should address the qualifications and job functions provided in the position job announcement.

The first step in drafting a letter is brainstorming. Give yourself ample pad space to take notes. Review each sentence in the qualifications and job functions sections of the announcement. Write each sentence at the top of a blank page, using one page for each sentence. *Do not write your answers in sentences.* Make lists instead to first determine how much information you have to work with.

Focus on the subject of each sentence and ask yourself the following questions:

- When did I do this? List dates by month/year for employment/volunteer work.
- Where did I do this? List employers/organizations worked for and job titles.
- How did I do this? List tools used, methods applied, activities performed.
- Who did I do it for? List internal and external customers.
- How often did I do this? Quantify frequency of activity. Times per day/month.

As you answer these questions, also consider the variety and complexity of your job duties and experience.

Variety gives the reviewers an idea of the range of your experience and how many different functions you are able to perform. For instance, if the topic is about providing customer service, consider

- the ways you interfaced with customers (in-person, by phone, via email or letter).
- the kinds of service you provided them (answered questions, directed to right person, resolved service problems).
- the different methods you used to satisfy the customer

Complexity gives the reviewers an idea of how well you can analyze, solve problems and make decisions. For instance, if the topic is about prioritizing and managing your workload, consider:

- the factors you take into account when you determine the importance of a task relative to other tasks (due date, who it's for, importance of issue, etc.).
- the methods you use to keep organized (calendars, MS schedule, task lists, tickler files)

The lists you create for each topic should provide you with enough information to write a paragraph about that topic.

Other Letter of Interest Points To Remember

Put yourself in the picture. *This is a sell yourself proposition. Take credit for what you have done and know how to do.* When you write your letter, use the word “I” to describe your background experience and responsibilities, and to identify your role.

Use the active voice. If you write in the passive voice you end up sounding like a textbook. For example:

Passive voice: *A monthly assignment schedule was developed and maintained to manage and prioritize my workload.*

Active voice *I developed and maintained a monthly assignment schedule to manage and prioritize my workload.*

Quantify. Your goal is to provide the reviewers with enough specific information to enable them to evaluate your application. One of the best ways to do this is to quantify your experience. Present your information in a way that tells how often you performed a specific task (frequency) and over what period of time you performed the task (duration).

For example, if you are asked to describe your experience managing a multi-line phone system, you could say either:

I am very experienced managing a multi-line phone system.

or

I have three years of experience managing a multi-line phone system for a staff of twelve responding to and directing an average of 100 calls a day.

Clearly, choice number two provides much better information to the evaluator.

Here's a finished example. One of the qualifications for the job stated on an announcement is “ability to respond to customer inquiries.” Asking myself the basic questions shown above, my finished paragraph might look like this.

While employed as a Civil Rights Specialist and Personnel Analyst for the Office of Human Resources Management between April 1988 and July 1998, I responded to numerous customer inquiries on a daily basis. Customer inquiries covered a range of topics, including the County's affirmative action plan, work force demographics, the job application and selection process, personnel guidelines, the availability of position openings, job accommodation, employee discipline, and a variety of other human resources areas. My customers included County employees, supervisors and managers, the Executive Office, the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney, job applicants, and the general public. I responded to these inquiries by telephone, in person, in writing by means of memoranda and reports, and on occasion, in formal depositions.

Cover Letter

Organizing Your Cover Letter

The cover letter should be organized in a business letter format.

Address and Salutation: With a little research (if the information is not provided on the job announcement) it is possible to identify the person to whom you should address the letter. Addressing the letter to a real person is much better than addressing it *To Whom It May Concern* or *Dear Sir or Madam*, etc.

Opening Paragraph: Identify the job you are applying for and provide some general background about yourself. Here's an example:

I am writing to apply for the position of Human Resources Coordinator with the Transit Division of the Department of Transportation. I have eleven years of experience in human resources and personnel services. From 1988 to 1997, I was employed as a Personnel Analyst and Civil Rights Specialist for the King County Office of Human Resources Management. I am currently the Placement Coordinator for the Department of Stadium Administration.

The Body of the Letter: The body of the letter will be a series of paragraphs addressing the qualifications and primary job functions in the job announcement, using the brainstorming and drafting techniques described on the previous pages. Address the most important topics first.

The Closing Paragraph(s): After you've established your credibility in terms of your professional experience and background, the final paragraph or two is a good place to describe your personal attributes as they relate to the job. Personal attributes include traits like being a team player, flexibility, problem solver, ability to multi-task, ability to work effectively with a variety of people, ability to work in a fast-paced environment, being well organized, meeting deadlines, being reliable, etc. Here's an example:

As a facility, the Kingdome is a demanding environment that requires employees to be both organized and flexible. As a public facility, in every sense of the word, we are constantly under the gun to get the job done right the first time and every time. For me this means having the ability to manage a variety of different projects at the same time, to coordinate a complex schedule of events, and to be prepared to deal with change when required by circumstances.

Based on my experience, I have a proven track record of working effectively in a fast-paced environment, finding new ways to solve problems, meeting the varied and often difficult demands of our customers, and being flexible enough to address problems as they come up while keeping the operation running smoothly. I have worked well with management, line employees, customers and the public. I think my background and skills would be an asset to you.

Sincerely,